

C/S - CZECHOSLOVAKS SEEKING ASYLUM IN SWITZERLAND

GENEVA, AUG. 29 (RFE SPECIAL) - ON AN ESTIMATED 1,000 CZECHOSLOVAK TOURISTS WHO WERE IN SWITZERLAND WHEN THEIR COUNTRY WAS INVADED, 50 HAVE ASKED FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE FEDERAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT IN BERN SAID THESE REQUESTS HAVE NOT BEEN TURNED DOWN BUT THE CZECHOSLOVAKS ARE BEING WARNED THAT ONCE GRANTED ASYLUM THEY WILL BE UNABLE TO RETURN TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

THE SPOKESMAN, HANS MUMENTHALER, SAID THOSE REQUESTING ASYLUM HAVE BEEN OFFERED WORK AND RESIDENCE PERMITS UNTIL THEY DEFINITELY MAKE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT RENOUNCING THEIR HOME COUNTRY.

"THERE HAVE BEEN ABOUT 50 REQUESTS FOR ASYLUM IN ALL," MUMENTHALER SAID. "ASKING FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM MEANS RENOUNCING ONE'S OWN COUNTRY AND THAT POSES SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF CONSCIENCE."

"THE CZECHS ARE VERY ATTACHED TO THEIR COUNTRY," MUMENTHALER ADDED.

SOME 600 OF THE 1,000 CZECH TOURISTS---OF WHOM ABOUT 300 RPT 300 HAVE LEFT FOR HOME SINCE---REQUESTED ASSISTANCE OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER.

FEDERAL AND CANTONAL AUTHORITIES PROVIDED TEMPORARY WORK PERMITS WITHOUT QUESTION AND PROVIDED EXTENDED VISAS. IN SOME CASES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WAS ALSO GIVEN.

"OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT WHICH WE RECEIVED FROM VARIOUS OFFICES AND ENTERPRISES WERE PLENTIFUL ENOUGH FOR US TO FIND WORK FOR THOSE CZECHS WHICH WANTED IT," MUMENTHALER SAID.

CZECH TOURISTS WITH CARS MEANWHILE ARE RECEIVING FREE GASOLINE IN SWITZERLAND.

THEY CAN GET GASOLINE COUPONS FREE AT ANY BRANCH OF THE SWISS AUTOMOBILE CLUB.

GASOLINE IMPORTERS SUPPLYING SERVICE STATIONS AGREED TO PROVIDE FREE PETROL FOLLOWING AN APPEAL BY THE SWISS RADIO.

THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN EMBASSY IN BERN TODAY PUBLISHED A LETTER OF THANKS TO THE SWISS PEOPLE FOR SUPPORT AND SYMPATHY RECEIVED FOLLOWING THE INVASION.

THE LETTER, ADDRESSED TO ALL SWISS PEOPLE, SAID:

"EACH DAY THE EMBASSY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN BERN RECEIVES INNUMERABLE LETTERS, DECLARATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND ANOTHER EXPRESSIONS OF DEEP SYMPATHY AND SWISS SOLIDARITY FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND ITS CAUSE.

"THESE EXPRESSIONS COME FROM LEVELS OF SOCIETY IN SWITZERLAND, FROM SCHOOLS, YOUTH ORGANISATIONS, FACTORIES, TRADE INSTITUTIONS, CULTURAL AND SPORTING ORGANISATIONS, OFFICES AND VARIOUS OFFICIAL BUREAUS.

"VERY OFTEN THESE MESSAGES ARE ACCOMPANIED BY MATERIAL AID IN FAVOR OF CZECH CITIZENS WHO ARE IN SWITZERLAND AT THIS TIME.

"THE EMBASSY CANNOT REPLY TO ALL THESE MESSAGES OF SYMPATHY AND SOLIDARITY. THIS IS WHY IT IS MAKING PUBLIC THIS DECLARATION, IN ORDER TO EXPRESS ITS THANKS TO ALL WHO SUPPORT CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND ITS PEOPLE IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES.

"THE EMBASSY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA ALSO THANKS THE SWISS FOR THE DIRECT AID GIVEN TO CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS."

THE SWISS SOCIETY OF WRITERS MEANWHILE HAS SENT A TELEGRAM OF SUPPORT TO CZECH WRITERS.

THE TELEGRAM ADDRESSED TO PRAGUE SAID:

"THE EVENTS THROUGH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN OPPRESSED AFFECT ALL WRITERS OF FREE COUNTRIES.

"WE EXPRESS THE SENTIMENTS OF OUR PROFOUND SOLIDARITY AND OUR HOPE TO SEE SPRING RETURN."

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